

REMARKS

This Supplemental Amendment is in response to the Office Action of March 19, 2003. The deficiencies in applicants' prior response, mailed January 10, 2003 and received by the Office on January 14, 2003, have been corrected. Applicants appreciate the Examiner's assistance in this regard.

If the Examiner has any further questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the applicants' attorney at the number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,

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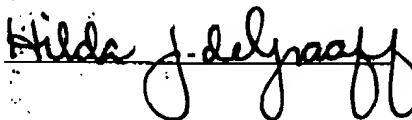
Enclosure:

New Abstract at page 23

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being sent via facsimile to Art Unit 3724, Examiner Clark F. Dexter, at facsimile number 703-305-3590.

Date:

April 8, 2003



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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE APRIL 7, 2003

The paragraph beginning at page 12 line 34 has been amended to read as follows:

In a preferred embodiment of the method of the present invention, a cutting step 108 will follow the comparison step 104 in FIGURE 1. As the foodstuff portion 200 travels on a conveyor system [202], the conveyor 202 will have brought the foodstuff portion to a cutting station 218 as shown in FIGURE 3. The cutting device 220 will be controlled by the computer 210 with the appropriate cutting path determined in an earlier step. Preferably, the cutting device in a method according to the present invention will use a band knife or an oscillating knife if the cut to be made is a long cut, but a high pressure water jet may also be used as well, to cut the foodstuff in accordance with the directions from the computer. Such cutting devices are described in U.S. Patent No. 5,931,178 to Pfarr, which is herein incorporated by reference. Bandsaws and blades are described in U.S. Patent No. 5,937,080 to Vogeley, Jr. et al., which is herein also incorporated by reference. However, other cutting devices, such as high pressure gas or lasers, that are well-known in the art may also be used.

The paragraph beginning at page 18, line 29 has been amended to read as follows:

FIGURE 12 schematically illustrates how a foodstuff portion 1100 may be cut to a desired thickness in accordance with the present invention. The apparatus 1101 illustrated in FIGURE 12 includes a first conveyor system 1102 for delivering foodstuff portions 1100 to the underside of a vacuum chamber 1104. The vacuum chamber is shown as including a housing 1106 in generally oblong shape having a rounded leading end portion 1107 overlying the conveyor 1102 which transitions to a substantially flat bottom section 1108 spaced above the upper rung of the belt 1110 of the conveyor. At approximately the end of the conveyor 1102 the vacuum chamber housing extends diagonally upwardly along section 1112 to a vertical end wall 1114 of the chamber. The top surface 1116 of the chamber housing [1116] 1106 is

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substantially flat. A belt 1118 is trained around the top 1116, left end 1107, flat bottom 1108 and diagonal 1112 sections of the vacuum chamber housing, as well as around a drive pulley 1113 positioned outwardly adjacent the end wall 1114 of the chamber housing. The drive pulley is mounted to the wall 1114 by a bracket 1122. The drive pulley can be driven by numerous methods, for instance by an electric motor, hydraulic motor or otherwise.

In the Abstract:

At page 23, the "Abstract of the Disclosure" section has been replaced with a new abstract.

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